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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 002385

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KCOR](#) [KDEM](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: ANTI-CORRUPTION UPDATE

REF: A. BAGHDAD 2312 ET AL
[1](#)B. BAGHDAD 1401
[1](#)C. BAGHDAD 1601 ET AL

Classified By: ACCO Joseph Stafford, reason 1.4 (b and d)

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (C) The Higher Judicial Council's spokesperson reported that Iraq's judiciary had received 445 corruption cases so far this year and already adjudicated over half of them, issuing many guilty verdicts. He asserted that some cases involved senior GOI officials. A Deputy Interior Minister acknowledged that corruption remained a problem in his ministry and cited as a case in point the confession by the alleged mastermind of the August 19 bombings that he paid \$10,000 to get the bomb-rigged trucks through security checkpoints. The Commission on Integrity head reported the arrest of a Deputy Transportation Minister on bribery charges, while provincial officials in Karabala received prison sentences for embezzlement. The Council of Representatives (COR) Integrity Committee head announced plans to resume questioning of ministers over corruption issues, saying he had requested the COR leadership's agreement to call in the Oil and Electricity Ministers. END SUMMARY.

CORRUPTION CASES IN THE JUDICIARY

[1](#)2. (SBU) In a recent meeting with Anti-Corruption Coordinator and staff (ACCO), the spokesperson for Iraq's Higher Judicial Council (HJC), Judge Abdel Sattar Bayrkdar, reported that nationwide the judiciary had received 445 corruption cases for trial so far this year. He stated that to date the courts had adjudicated over half of these cases, estimating that the large majority had resulted in guilty verdicts. Asked for details on major cases, Judge Bayrkdar responded that we would need to obtain them from the trial judges. He asserted, though, that a number of the cases involved senior officials, recalling that among those convicted were two upper-echelon bureaucrats with the Finance Ministry, a Director General from another unspecified ministry, and a member of the GOI's Olympics Committee. Asked about the pending trial of former Trade Minister Abdel Falah Al-Sudani (Ref A), Judge Bayrkdar stated that as yet no date had been set for Al-Sudani's trial in Baghdad's Central Criminal Court of Iraq.

[1](#)3. (C) COMMENT: At first glance, Judge Bayrkdar's figure of 445 corruption cases, with the large majority resulting in convictions, is good news, as it suggests a substantial increase in successful prosecution of corruption cases, compared to 2008. The Commission on Integrity (COI), the GOI's lead anti-corruption agency, previously reported that it had submitted only 382 cases to the judiciary throughout 2008, with 97 convictions. However, our sense is that many of the 2008 cases were thrown out due to the February 2008 Amnesty Law (Ref B), which resulted in the halting of

prosecutions or reversal of convictions for thousands of persons charged with corruption and other crimes. We intend to approach trial judges at the CCCI and elsewhere for further assessment of the seemingly positive trend in bringing corrupt officials to account. END COMMENT

CORRUPTION'S NEGATIVE IMPACT ON SECURITY

¶4. (C) The horrific August 19 bombings in Baghdad and the televised confession by the alleged mastermind, Wisam Ali Kadim, that he paid \$10,000 to get the bomb-rigged trucks through security checkpoints have underscored terrorists' attempts to exploit corrupt officials in conducting their nefarious activities. In a discussion with ACCO, Deputy Interior Minister Major General Ayden Qadir acknowledged that corruption in the Interior Ministry (MOI) remained a major problem and cited Kadim's confession -- which he described as "genuine" -- as a case in point. (COMMENT: The Deputy Minister's remarks notwithstanding, reporting in other channels indicates there are doubts about how "genuine" Kadim's confession is. END COMMENT) The Deputy Minister claimed that the overall level of corruption in the MOI had declined somewhat in recent years, but that a wide array of abuses, e.g., payment of bribes to obtain jobs as police officers and senior officers pocketing salaries of "ghost" policemen, continued. (COMMENT: We note that a recent BBC piece, entitled "Corruption Undermines Iraqi Security," featured, inter alia, the claim by an Iraqi businessman that he paid bribes to ensure the smooth passage of his trucks through security checkpoints. END COMMENT) The Deputy Minister added that there were cases of public disaffection

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over GOI officials' corrupt practices leading persons to join terrorist ranks. He mentioned, to illustrate, that youths recently arrested on terrorism charges in Diyala province had told authorities that they had joined extremist groups out of outrage over officials' corrupt behavior.

ARRESTS AND CONVICTIONS

¶5. (C) The COI head, Judge Raheem Al-Ugaili, announced September 2 the arrest of Deputy Minister of Transportation, Adnan Al-Abeidly, on bribery charges. Further details were provided by the chairman of the Council of Representatives Integrity Committee, Shaikh Sabah Al-Saidi, who told the press that the Deputy Minister had demanded a bribe of \$500,000 from a local firm handling security at Baghdad airport to "facilitate" the renewal of its contract with the airport's management. According to Shaikh Sabah, the firm (evidently cooperating in a sting operation) made an initial payment of \$100,000 and then reported the bribe to the COI, which then obtained a warrant for the Deputy Minister's arrest. (COMMENT: As previously reported, there have been relatively few cases in recent years of senior GOI officials being prosecuted and convicted on corruption charges; this case bears close watch, as does that, referred to above, of the former Trade Minister and other senior Trade Ministry officials facing corruption charges. END COMMENT)

¶6. (C) PRT Karbala confirms media reports that four officials in Karbala were recently convicted of embezzling provincial government funds, receiving prison terms ranging from one to five years. Reportedly, Karbala's Governor, Aqeel Al-Khazali, uncovered the embezzlement scheme and alerted the local COI office. The leading culprit was evidently the head of administration for the Karbala Provincial Council.

CALL FOR QUESTIONING OF MINISTERS ON CORRUPTION

¶7. (C) COR Integrity Committee head Shaikh Sabah Al-Saidi told the press September 2 that his committee planned to

summon ministers for questioning over corruption issues when the COR returned from its current recess next week. He stated that he had requested the COR leadership's (Speaker and Deputy Speakers) agreement to summon, in particular, the Oil and Electricity Ministers. Shaikh Sabah made no mention of specific corruption allegations that he sought to raise with these ministers. He went on to assert that, as there were unspecified ministers "known for their corruption," it was vital that his committee and the COR generally perform their oversight function vis-a-vis the executive branch. (COMMENT: Shaikh Sabah Al-Saidi personally conducted the questioning in May of then-Trade Minister Al-Sudani, subjecting him to a tough grilling that was followed by the latter's resignation and arrest. It remains to be seen whether the COR leadership will support his request to question the Oil and Electricity Ministers; as previously reported (Ref C), the questioning of Al-Sudani resulted in skirmishing between the COR and Prime Minister Nouri Al-Maliki, who warned parliamentarians that any further such grilling of his ministers would prompt him to "open the files" on corruption within the COR itself. The questioning of ministers in the COR could divert attention from urgent legislative priorities, including adoption of a national elections law. END COMMENT)

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